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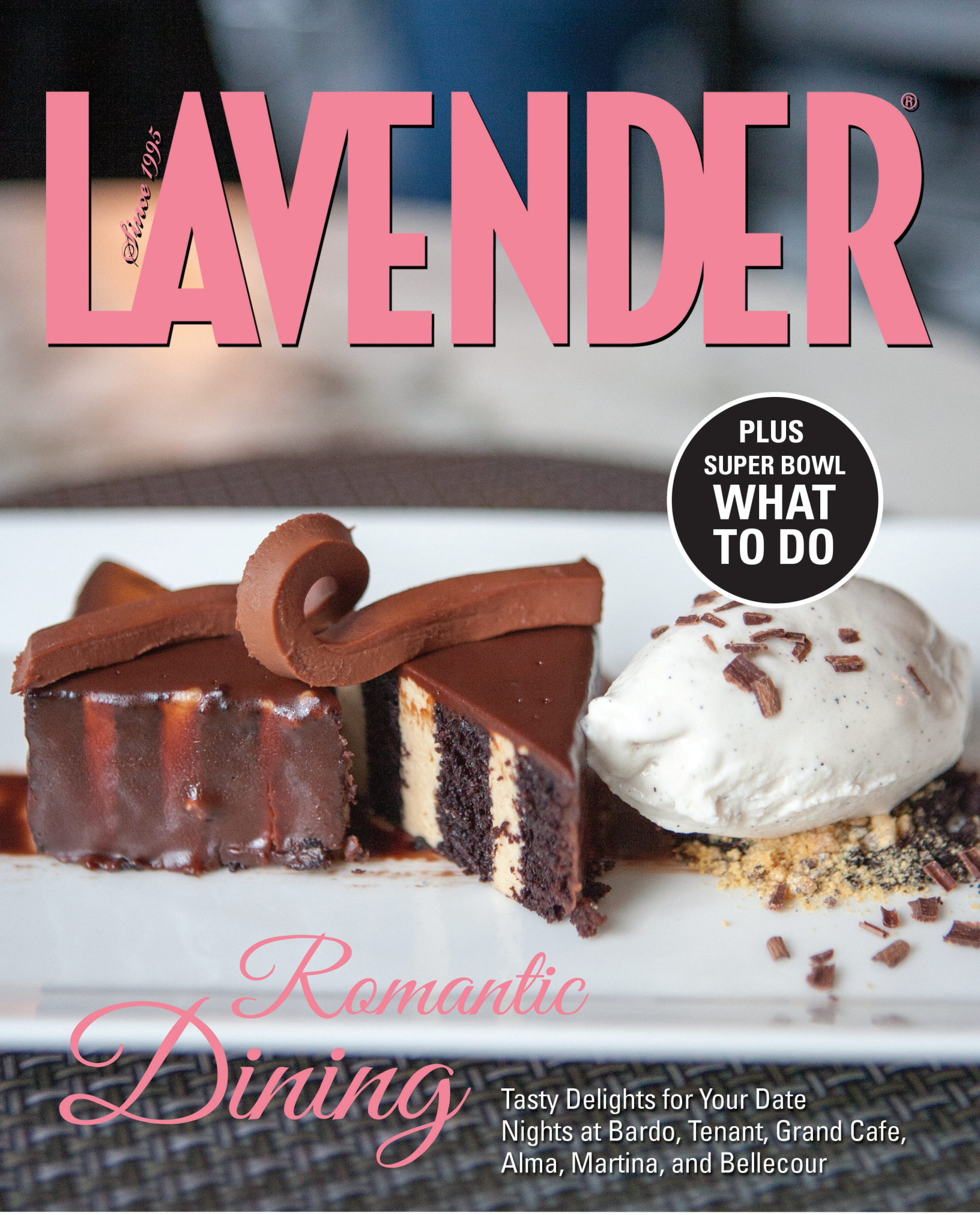

Romantic Dining

Tasty Delights for Your Date Nights at Bardo, Tenant, Grand Cafe, Alma, Martina, and Bellecour

What is TRUVADA for PrEP?

TRUVADA for PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) is a prescription medicine that is used together with safer sex practices to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 through sex. This use is only for HIV-negative adults who are at high risk of getting HIV-1. To help determine your risk of getting HIV-1, talk openly with your healthcare provider about your sexual health.

Ask your healthcare provider if you have questions about how to prevent getting HIV. Always practice safer sex and use condoms to lower the chance of sexual contact with body fluids. Never reuse or share needles or other items that have body fluids on them.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA for PrEP?

Before taking TRUVADA for PrEP:

- **You must be HIV-negative before you start taking TRUVADA for PrEP.** You must get tested to make sure that you do not already have HIV-1. Do not take TRUVADA to reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 unless you are confirmed to be HIV-negative.
- **Many HIV-1 tests can miss HIV-1 infection in a person who has recently become infected.** If you have flu-like symptoms, you could have recently become infected with HIV-1. Tell your healthcare provider if you had a flu-like illness within the last month before starting or at any time while taking TRUVADA for PrEP. Symptoms of new HIV-1 infection include tiredness, fever, joint or muscle aches, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, night sweats, and/or enlarged lymph nodes in the neck or groin.

While taking TRUVADA for PrEP:

- **You must continue to use safer sex practices. Just taking TRUVADA for PrEP may not keep you from getting HIV-1.**
- **You must stay HIV-negative to keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP:**
  - Get tested for HIV-1 at least every 3 months.
  - If you think you were exposed to HIV-1, tell your healthcare provider right away.
- **To further help reduce your risk of getting HIV-1:**
  - Know your HIV status and the HIV status of your partners.
  - Get tested for other sexually transmitted infections. Other infections make it easier for HIV to infect you.
  - Get information and support to help reduce risky sexual behavior, such as having fewer sex partners.
  - Do not miss any doses of TRUVADA. Missing doses may increase your risk of getting HIV-1 infection.
- **If you do become HIV-1 positive, you need more medicine than TRUVADA alone to treat HIV-1.** TRUVADA by itself is not a complete treatment for HIV-1. If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.

TRUVADA can cause serious side effects:

- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** TRUVADA is not approved to treat HBV. If you have HBV and stop taking TRUVADA, your HBV may suddenly get worse. Do not stop taking TRUVADA without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to monitor your health.

Who should not take TRUVADA for PrEP?

Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP if you:

- **Already have HIV-1 infection or if you do not know your HIV-1 status.** If you are HIV-1 positive, you need to take other medicines with TRUVADA to treat HIV-1. TRUVADA by itself is not a complete treatment for HIV-1. If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.
- **Also take** certain medicines to treat hepatitis B infection.

What are the other possible side effects of TRUVADA for PrEP?

Serious side effects of TRUVADA may also include:

- **Kidney problems, including kidney failure.** Your healthcare provider may do blood tests to check your kidneys before and during treatment with TRUVADA. If you develop kidney problems, your healthcare provider may tell you to stop taking TRUVADA.
- **Too much lactic acid in your blood** (lactic acidosis), which is a serious but rare medical emergency that can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, stomach pain with nausea and vomiting, cold or blue hands and feet, feel dizzy or lightheaded, or a fast or abnormal heartbeat.
- **Severe liver problems,** which in rare cases can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark "tea-colored" urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, or stomach-area pain.
- **Bone problems,** including bone pain, softening, or thinning, which may lead to fractures. Your healthcare provider may do tests to check your bones.

Common side effects in people taking TRUVADA for PrEP are stomach-area (abdomen) pain, headache, and decreased weight. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or do not go away.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA for PrEP?

- **All your health problems.** Be sure to tell your healthcare provider if you have or have had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis.
- **If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.** It is not known if TRUVADA can harm your unborn baby. If you become pregnant while taking TRUVADA for PrEP, talk to your healthcare provider to decide if you should keep taking TRUVADA.
- **If you are breastfeeding** (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. If you become HIV-positive, HIV can be passed to the baby in breast milk.
- **All the medicines you take,** including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. TRUVADA may interact with other medicines. Keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.
- **If you take certain other medicines** with TRUVADA, your healthcare provider may need to check you more often or change your dose. These medicines include certain medicines to treat hepatitis C (HCV) infection.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.FDA.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please see Important Facts about TRUVADA for PrEP including important warnings on the following page.

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TRUVADA for PrEP™ is a once-daily prescription medicine that can help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 when taken every day and used together with safer sex practices.

- TRUVADA for PrEP is only for adults who are at high risk of getting HIV through sex.
- You must be HIV-negative before you start taking TRUVADA for PrEP.

Ask your doctor about your risk of getting HIV-1 infection and if TRUVADA for PrEP may be right for you.

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IMPORTANT FACTS

This is only a brief summary of important information about taking TRUVADA for PrEP™ (pre-exposure prophylaxis) to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection. This does not replace talking to your healthcare provider about your medicine.

MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT TRUVADA FOR PrEP

Before starting TRUVADA for PrEP:

- **You must be HIV-1 negative.** You must get tested to make sure that you do not already have HIV-1. Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 unless you are confirmed to be HIV-1 negative.
- **Many HIV-1 tests can miss HIV-1 infection in a person who has recently become infected.** Symptoms of new HIV-1 infection include flu-like symptoms, tiredness, fever, joint or muscle aches, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, night sweats, and/or enlarged lymph nodes in the neck or groin. Tell your healthcare provider if you have had a flu-like illness within the last month before starting TRUVADA for PrEP.

While taking TRUVADA for PrEP:

- **You must continue to use safer sex practices. Just taking TRUVADA for PrEP may not keep you from getting HIV-1.**
- **You must stay HIV-negative to keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP.** Get tested for HIV-1 at least every 3 months while taking TRUVADA for PrEP. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you think you were exposed to HIV-1 or have a flu-like illness while taking TRUVADA for PrEP.
- **If you do become HIV-1 positive, you need more medicine than TRUVADA alone to treat HIV-1.** If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.
- See the "How To Further Reduce Your Risk" section for more information.

TRUVADA may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** TRUVADA is not approved to treat HBV. If you have HBV, your HBV may suddenly get worse if you stop taking TRUVADA. Do not stop taking TRUVADA without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to check your health regularly for several months.

ABOUT TRUVADA FOR PrEP

TRUVADA for PrEP is a prescription medicine used together with safer sex practices to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 through sex. This use is only for HIV-negative adults who are at high risk of getting HIV-1.

- To help determine your risk of getting HIV-1, talk openly with your healthcare provider about your sexual health.

Do NOT take TRUVADA for PrEP if you:

- **Already have HIV-1 infection or if you do not know your HIV-1 status.**
- Take certain medicines to treat hepatitis B infection.

HOW TO TAKE TRUVADA FOR PrEP

- **Take 1 tablet once a day, every day**, not just when you think you have been exposed to HIV-1.
- Do not miss any doses. Missing doses may increase your risk of getting HIV-1 infection.
- Use TRUVADA for PrEP together with condoms and safer sex practices.
- Get tested for HIV-1 at least every 3 months. You must stay HIV-negative to keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF TRUVADA FOR PrEP

TRUVADA can cause serious side effects, including:

- Those in the "Most Important Information About TRUVADA for PrEP" section.
- New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure.
- Too much lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis), which is a serious but rare medical emergency that can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, stomach pain with nausea and vomiting, cold or blue hands and feet, feel dizzy or lightheaded, or a fast or abnormal heartbeat.
- Severe liver problems, which in rare cases can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark "tea-colored" urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, or stomach-area pain.
- Bone problems.

Common side effects in people taking TRUVADA for PrEP include stomach-area (abdomen) pain, headache, and decreased weight.

These are not all the possible side effects of TRUVADA. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you have any new symptoms while taking TRUVADA for PrEP.

Your healthcare provider will need to do tests to monitor your health before and during treatment with TRUVADA for PrEP.

BEFORE TAKING TRUVADA FOR PrEP

Tell your healthcare provider if you:

- Have or have had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis.
- Have any other medical conditions.
- Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- Are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. If you become HIV-positive, HIV can pass to the baby in breast milk.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take:

- Keep a list that includes all prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements, and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist.
- Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about medicines that should not be taken with TRUVADA for PrEP.

HOW TO FURTHER REDUCE YOUR RISK

- Know your HIV status and the HIV status of your partners.
- Get tested for other sexually transmitted infections. Other infections make it easier for HIV to infect you.
- Get information and support to help reduce risky sexual behavior, such as having fewer sex partners.
- Do not share needles or personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them.

GET MORE INFORMATION

- This is only a brief summary of important information about TRUVADA for PrEP. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more, including how to prevent HIV infection.
- Go to start.truvada.com or call 1-800-GILEAD-5
- If you need help paying for your medicine, visit start.truvada.com for program information.

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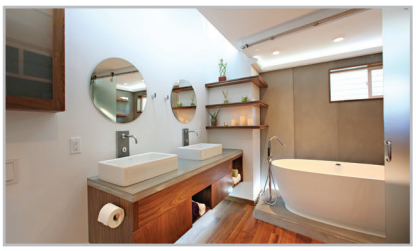

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ON THE COVER
A delectable dessert from Bardo, located in Northeast Minneapolis. Photo by Hubert Bonnet.

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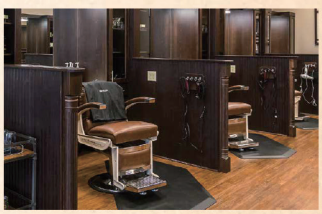

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FROM THE EDITOR | BY CHRIS TARBOX

Le chemin vers le coeur

"They say that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach."

First off: who's "they"? I'd like to meet these people. Secondly: yes, absolutely true. Well, at least for me. I'm not going to speak for other men (or women, for that matter, because this logic could honestly be applied to anyone), but there is a certain je ne sais quoi to that whole saying. Why is food so intoxicating? Why does it vex us so? Food is a basic human necessity, but you never hear about anyone going all gaga and romantic about oxygen in the same way.

"And finally, monsieur et madame, we have an aged bottle of air, canned and pneumatically sealed with the utmost precision in a Grenoble village in 1965. $55 a glass."

Or maybe there are people like that. It's 2018, times change. But I digress. There's nothing quite like a sojourn to a romantic culinary getaway, whether it's on the French Riviera or just at the restaurant two blocks down. And it's not just the food that makes many a memory on these excursions: the presentation, the ambiance, the restaurant itself.

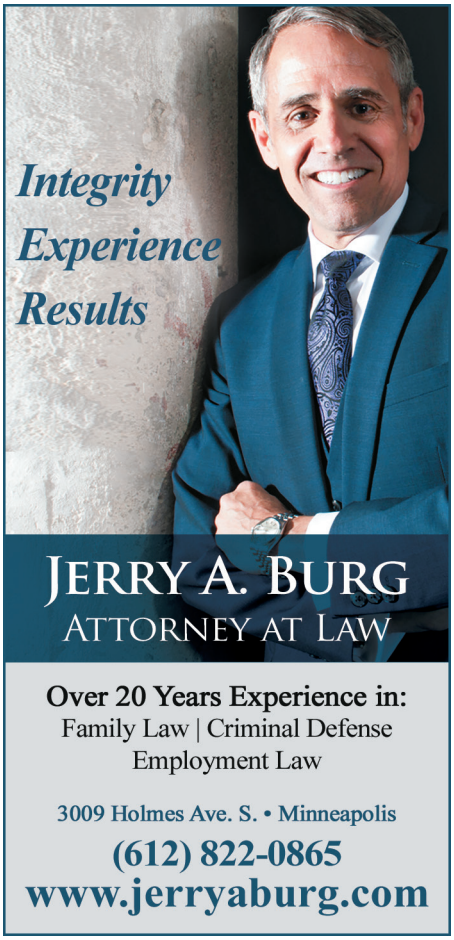
But also the food. Let's be honest. And for this edition of Lavender—the aptly named 2018 Romantic Dining issue—we've sought out the hottest dining hotspots in the Twin Cities to tantalize your tastebuds. From the divine New American fare of Tenant, to the 1930s delights of Bardo—which I can personally attest to bearing a dessert menu that will, for lack of more sophisticated parlance, punch you straight in the mouth with its flavor muscles—there are many cozy, sexy, and downright délicieuse destinations at your disposal.

But romantic dining isn't all we're offering in this issue. If you live in Minneapolis, you're well aware that Super Bowl 52 is right around the corner, and, like any big event, the accompanying parties aren't far behind. So if you're hanging around town for the big game or just want to absorb the bacchanalia that surrounds it, we've got a a handy Super Bowl What To Do guide, which includes football parties, GLBT-friendly shindigs, fan festivals, and much more.

Finally, a friendly reminder that Lavender's next First Thursdays happy hour event will be Thursday, February 1 at Wilde Cafe and Spirits, located right down Main Street in Northeast Minneapolis on the Mississippi. Come for the networking, stay for the great grub and delicious drinks. After all: something something heart, something something stomach. Allons-y!

Yes, I took French in college, could you tell? ■

Photo courtesy of BigStock/MonkeyBusinessImages



A WORD IN EDGEWISE | BY E.B. BOATNER

Outfitting for the Next Trip 'Round

When I was a kid, baggage referred to those cardboard suitcases we kept in the attic. With handles for carrying (no wheels, yet), they were usually tan with different shades of brown stripes around the middle. My dad had a brown leather one, my mother a pair in blue (she always packed more).

Getting them—or some of them—down from storage meant my parents were off on a trip, or, if school was out, I was heading off to camp. In any event, suitcases were meant to hold personal belongings for some sojourn away from the house. Very simple. No fuss.

It's only recently that "baggage," a word that used to evoke images of Liz Taylor, diamonds, poodles, trunks, and retainers, has morphed into something more sinister, from the tangible and glamorous to internalized lifetime burdens of mental angst; as weighty as the cases, but unable to be unpacked at journey's end.

Now, this personal, emotional baggage with its soiled contents remains lodged in our heads, poised, waiting to strike out at unfortunate, although predictable, moments. "Have just one more drink," it whispers, or, "Thanksgiving dinner's the perfect time to tell Aunt Betty and her 'friend' what you feel about gays."

And you do, even though the last time you drank to excess or "spoke the truth" it didn't turn out well, either. Surely, you hadn't forgotten? Why didn't you choose ginger ale this Thanksgiving? Why, when you speak your "truth" is it always hurtful, never helpful? It took a long time to realize that all my own baggage wasn't in the attic.

As we start another circumnavigation of our G2V star, we might want to be more discriminating about what we're bringing aboard for the journey. As a writer and photographer, I carry plenty of actual heavy objects through TSA to go to Paris or Amsterdam. How might I lighten the ballast in my skull?

Not yet having removed the beam from my own eye, I won't criticize the mote in yours; but perhaps, as we embark upon this solar circuit, we could start by examining the behaviors we repeat that never bring peace or comfort to others or ourselves. Leave them behind this time; they'll not be missed, I guarantee.

Bon voyage! ■

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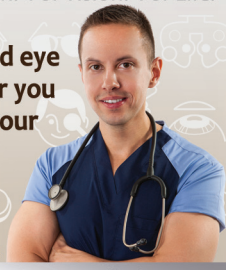

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ISHMAEL

Through Feb. 4
Jungle Theater
2951 Lyndale Ave. S., Minneapolis
612-822-7063
www.jungletheater.com

Herman Melville (1819-1891) was a gay man who looms as a giant of western literature. His most famous work, *Moby Dick,* has been an inspiring source for film and stage adaptations. Themes of obsession and vengeance are beguilingly related by its protagonist, Ishmael. He is the observer of such dark qualities in Ahab, the sea captain who cannot forgive a great whale for biting off one of his legs at the knee.

At the Jungle, Jack Weston plays 12 characters from the 1851 novel, adapted for stage by Hollywood's Leo Geter. Jeremy Cohen directs with bluegrass accompaniment by fiddler Nate Snipe, banjo player Kevin Kniebel, and Jim Parker on mandolin, guitar, and clogs. All three sing as well.

Ishmael. Photo by William Clark

DEAD MAN WALKING

Jan. 27-Feb. 3
Ordway Music Theater
345 Washington St., St. Paul
612-333-6669
www.mnopera.org

Minnesota Opera is a topnotch presenter of classic pre-20th century fare, but it has also been a dedicated producer of contemporary works that reflect concerns specific to the past half century or so. For example: *Nixon in China, The Handmaid's Tale, The Shining, The Manchurian Candidate, Doubt.* Their latest in this vein is *Dead Man Walking*. Like most of the aforesaid titles, you're probably familiar with the film.

Dead Man Walking tells of Sister Helen Prejean's challenges as a spiritual guide to a Louisiana death row inmate. She firmly puts forth the idea of being Christlike in facing up to one's crimes and one's mortality. Mezzo-soprano Catherine Martin plays Sister Helen, the role which won Susan Sarandon an Oscar. Jake Heggie composed the lyrical music. Highly honored gay playwright Terrence McNally wrote the libretto.

Minnesota Opera President and General Director Ryan Taylor says, "As a part of our New Works Initiative, Minnesota Opera strives to produce works that address important current issues and showcase the talents of our own American composers and librettists." He is struck by *Dead Man Walking's* "themes of love, redemption, spirituality, and forgiveness."

THE MAIDS

Jan. 25 – Feb. 17
Artspace Grain Belt Warehouse, Studio 202
77 Thirteenth Ave. NE, Minneapolis
612-401-4506
www.darkstormy.org

Legendary gay writer Jean Genet (1910-1986) was a thief, sex worker, and pimp. The Frenchman spent much time in prison and was called an outlaw in both life and art. He obviously outraged the political Right. That said, in 1968 many leftists abhorred that when Genet lent support to protesters at the 1968 Democratic Convention, he enthused over how gorgeous the hunky Chicago cops were in their uniforms (the young Genet was dishonorably discharged from the French Foreign Legion for homosexual activity).

The Maids. Photo by Hilary Roberts

A generation ago, gay men who insisted on the "positive image" view of homosexuality were known to ignore and even denounce Genet for his imperfections. But being positive isn't necessarily a requirement for making great and meaningful art. It was this lens of criminality and raw homosexuality through which the ingenious Genet created. This gave him an empathy and understanding of those on society's margins, such as the real life Papin sisters who murdered their employer's wife and daughter in the 1930s. It was this event that inspired him to write *The Maids* (1947).

Dark & Stormy Productions is reviving this unsettling gem under the direction of Sara Marsh. She says, "*The Maids* is a complex play and a slightly out-of-the-box choice for Dark & Stormy, so it's perhaps fitting that I'm both playing Solange and also making my professional directorial debut with it. At its heart, this play is about the complexities of relationships between women. It's like *Mean Girls* (as grownups) on steroids, with the backdrop of mid-20th century France, presented through the prism of absurdist theatre—and those factors give enough distance and dark humor to make it palatable and sugar the pill for the audience."

Marsh also thinks *The Maids* raises deep questions about women, such as, "How do women love each other? How and when does that love mix with hate? How is that love, sexual or not, stigmatized by society? When and how and why do women choose to help or hurt each other—so often dictated by societal circumstances. I like to say this is a play of 'edges'—who's got the edge, who's trying to get an edge, and who had an edge but just lost it."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

Sanctuary. Photo by Terry Gydesen

SANCTUARY: A CONCERT CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF IMMIGRANTS TO MINNESOTA

Jan. 19, 21
Ordway Concert Hall
345 Washington St., St. Paul
651-224-4222
www.onevoicemn.org

One Voice Mixed Chorus celebrates the music of Minnesota immigrants from early Scandinavia, to African-Americans arriving via the Underground Railroad, to Mexican, Hmong, and Somali immigrants of recent decades. The chorus of GLBT community members and straight allies has been spurred on by current controversies regarding immigration and Uncle Sam.

Artistic Director Jane Ramseyer Miller also includes "the Dakota and Anishinaabe people who first called Minnesota home. Ojibwe water protector, Sharon Day, taught us the Nibi Water song and the concert now includes this Ojibwe music with a beautiful water blessing."

She adds, "We have also partnered with Green Card Voices, which has collected stories of youth immigrants. Queer youth storytellers will be featured and Green Card Voices photos and stories will be displayed in the Ordway lobby."

Moreover, *Sanctuary* includes selections in French and Arabic, a Swedish folk dance, and the former national anthem of Somalia. Operetta fans can hear *The Lumberjack Chorus* from gay composer Benjamin Britten and gay librettist W. H. Auden's *Paul Bunyan.*

A STEADY RAIN

Through Feb. 3
Gremlin Theatre, 550 Vandalia St., St. Paul
888-71-TICKETS
www.gremlintheatre.org

In Lavender's annual Year in Review, Peter Christian Hansen was named Best Dramatic Actor for Torch Theater's *True West* in 2011. Dustin Bronson was named Best Comedic Actor for Mixed Blood's *Hir* in 2015. You can guess that catching them in Gremlin Theatre's *A Steady Rain* is one of the best bets for winter theater. These two magically gifted men will reach into the psyche of law

A Steady Rain. Photo by Sarah Baue

enforcement officers, Hansen plays Joey, Bronson plays Denny.

Accomplished director, Ellen Fenster, always plumbs the depths. Recall her devastating Gremlin staging of Paul Zindel's female-centered *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds* five years ago. With *A Steady Rain* written by Keith Huff (television's *Mad Men, House of Cards*) she gets to probe the underbelly of masculinity.

Hansen, also Gremlin's Artistic Director, relates, "Denny and Joey have been friends ever since they were five or six. They grew up together on the tough streets of Chicago, fought together constantly, were inseparable. They both went into the police force and have been partners out on those same streets. They literally have their lives in each other's hands time and again. Needless to say, they are almost a part of each other, with Denny as the alpha male and Joey as his constant sidekick."

Hansen continues, "Their relationship is tested in new and extraordinary ways and slowly begins to unravel; even pitting the two friends against each other and testing just how far their loyalties to each other extend and who really has the upper hand. Denny's attempt to sober Joey up leads to Joey's constant presence and with it, a new rivalry and tension that develops in Denny's home. Denny's increasing violence and willingness to operate outside the lines of the law strain the lives of all involved to the breaking point. As children, they played a game called 'Last Man Standing'. As the play unfolds amid a series of shocking episodes, it appears that this deadly game has turned real." ■

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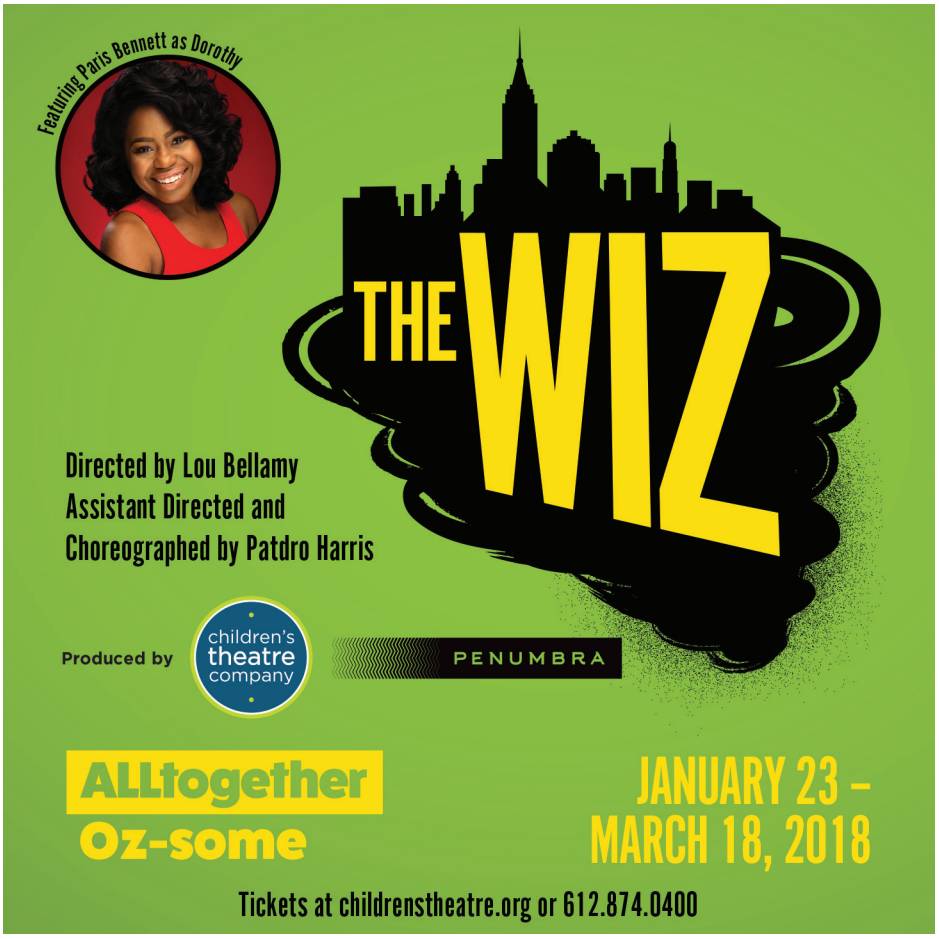

Monastery at Einsiredelm, visited by pilgrims. Photo by Carla Waldemar

Swiss Charm

On the tram to baggage claim in Zurich's airport, there's the sound of cowbells. The blue notes of an Alpine horn. The image of a Heidi-looka-like winking through the window. Everything but chocolates, and those will soon appear on the pillow in your hotel room. Cheese follows, too.

Along with those national icons, Switzerland has produced some lesser-known dramatic moments, too. Now's a perfect time to trace them, as the country approaches the 500th anniversary of its unique religious reformation, on the heels of reforms in neighboring Germany.

Huldrych Zwingli was Switzerland's Martin Luther, albeit even more liberal in his thinking, and Zurich is the place to which this former Catholic priest was summoned by its businessmen and politicos back in the early 1500s to spread the message of reform he'd been widely preaching. They were fed up with the Catholic Church's excesses, and quickly adopted Zwingli's sweeping changes. Among them: Abolish sales of indulgences and the opulent clerical lifestyle they provided. No more artwork glorifying saints. Nor celibacy. Nor Latin (he, too, translated the Bible into laymen's German). An end to ostentatious finery. Nein to excesses of alcohol and gambling. Begging was banned in favor of food and employment provided to the underclass. And the list goes on.

Church property was ceded to the city, starting with Fraumunster of 12th-century origin. Its abbess turned over the building and promptly got married. Today her statue stands in the cloister, while inside glimmer the vivid Chagall stained-glass windows of 1967. Nearby stands St. Peter's, upon a Roman site—the first church built after the Reformation. Across the river, near the Wasserkirche lit by Giacometti's wondrous stained glass, rises Zwingli's statue, clutching a scary sword. It's close to his home and Grossmunster Cathedral, where he preached his revolutionary message. Massive bronze doors depict scenes from the reformer's life. In the crypt looms a giant statue of the church's founder, Charlemagne. (The house of a revolutionary of another sort—Lenin—anchors the 'hood, too.)

Forget those altercations for an afternoon to wander the twisting alleys of Old Town, where a cache of avant-garde designers offer knitwear, jewelry, home design, and more. Hidden among their gables you'll find Opfechammer—Apple Chamber— the oldest wine café in town, for rosti potatoes with bratwurst served on antique tables thickly carved with diners' names of past centuries. Or head to Karl der Grosse, a working man's lunch spot, to savor meatloaf or curry.

Hitli stakes its claim as the oldest vegetarian restaurant in Europe (think 1898), but its lively setting is anything but antique. Join the buffet line to choose among 100 tasty treats, then linger weekends as it morphs into a music club. Primp for an elegant supper at Zunfthaus zur Waag, whose fourth-generation owner excels in classic local favorites, from veal to venison with spaetzle noodles. Stroll off the calories along neighboring Bahnhofstrasse, the Fifth Avenue of town.

You'll end up at the Swiss National Museum, whose fake-Gothic castle contains lodes of history. Kunsthaus Art Museum celebrates the masters, starting with Rodin's Gates of Hell on to Rubens, Rembrandt, and Warhol, climaxing in two of Monet's most pensive water lilies. The artists of tomorrow? Find them in happening Zurich West, hotbed of all things avant.

Lovely Lucerne, an hour distant (the excellent-value Swiss Travel Pass allows unlimited travel by train, tram, bus, and boat), didn't get the message. It remains a Catholic city, showcasing churches such as Hofkirche, an elegant Baroque beauty, and cozy St.-Peterskapelle, near the medieval Kornmarkt, its ancient walls brimming with historic frescoes.

Spanning the river flowing into Lake Lucerne are two covered bridges, twin symbols of the city. Each boasts a series of 17th-century roof panels—one, detailing Swiss history (yup, there's William Tell) and the other, a cautionary lesson led by a dancing skeleton. Paintings of a modern thrust are celebrated in Sammlung Rosengart, boasting an entire floor of Picassos, and upstairs, Chagall, Matisse, Miro, and more.

The river tumbles into Lake Lucerne, where the newly launched MS Diamant offers boat tours—ours, supplemented by a traditional dinner feast called raclette. Diners DIY it by melting yummy cheese over a hill of boiled potatoes.

Pilgrims—either the pious, to visit the amazing Benedictine monastery, or athletic, keen to hike or ski the surrounding peaks—board trains for the hour's jaunt to Einsiedeln, whose massive monastery dominates the tiny town. This breathtaking Baroque showpiece climaxes in a chapel dedicated to the famed Black Madonna, dressed for success in gilded couture. Daily its monks offer Gregorian chants, and in summer, weekly organ concerts (BTW, Zwingli served two years here before heading off to Zurich). The monks' Rococo library clasps priceless tomes such as the illuminated parchment volume created right here in 950 A.D.

Another hour-long train ride leads to Engelberg, famed equally for its ski slopes and its own Baroque monastery, gloriously rebuilt in 1729

after its founding in 1120. Affable Brother Benedikt, 28, one of its 27 monks, joined us in a warming lunch—pea soup, pasta— before guiding us through another wondrous library, whose treasures include a volume from 850 A.D. and age-old graffiti of a preening monk. Intricate inlaid wood is the handiwork of another talented brother. In the ornate white and gold chapel, where Mendelssohn once played the organ, Brother Benedikt wakens the pipes for guests. The brothers also own the property's cheese shop, where we're met by a horse-drawn sleigh for a tour of the snow-kissed valley beneath the slopes.

Hop the train to Basel, pinpointing the spot on the Rhine where Switzerland shares borders with Germany and France. Those neighbors swarm to Basel to work in its booming pharma industry and savor its vibrant art scene in the city known as the most free-thinking in the land.

Erasmus, the liberal Dutch philosopher, published his translation of the New Testament here. Zionist Theodore Herzl stayed at its patrician Trois Rois Hotel, where in 1896 he staked his historic claim: "I founded the Jewish State here." Napoleon stopped for lunch. So did Picasso.

If they'd ventured across the bridge, they might have dined in homey Restaurant Fischerstube, once headquarters for a bygone fishermen's guild. Or dipped bread into melted cheese at Restaurant Kunsthalle Fondue Stubli.

Today it's world-renowned starchitects who've put their stamp on the city: Heurzog & de Meuron, Renzo Piano, and Frank Gehry, to name-drop a few. Basel's renowned Kunstmuseum showcases contempo masters as well as a stellar collection of Holbein paintings and a retrospective of Marc Chagall, who adopted Basel as his home. The H & de M crew also put their stamp on Volkshaus Basel, a smart bistro which soothed jetlag with pate and osso buco.

Ride Tram 6 to the end of the line to discover the heart-thumping Fondation Beyeler, home of modernists from Warhol to Picasso, Giacometti to Klee, in architect Piano's lush setting flecked with water lilies (Monet's are inside).

Back in the historical center, the pink-stone Rathaus (Town Hall) sports overweight cherubs frolicking on its façade facing the buzzing Marktplatz, while up the hill rises the Munster, Basel's 13th-century cathedral, where Erasmus lies entombed. Stroll along the riverbank to the Papiermuseum, occupying a medieval mill where paper was once made, and still is. After viewing the evolution of the process, visitors are invited to produce their own.

When to visit? During Basel's famous Art Fair. In December, when Christmas markets glimmer. Or any time you're in need of Swiss bliss. For info, visit www.MySwitzerland.com. ■

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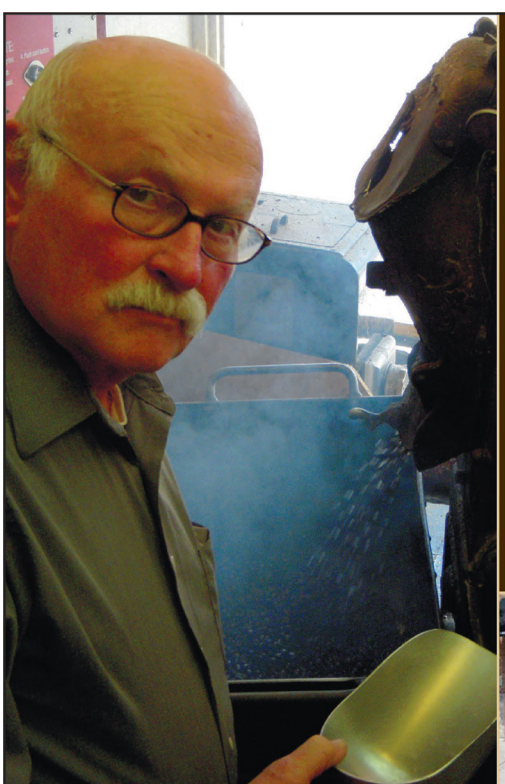
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Romantic Dining: Bardo

BY JOY SUMMERS

A posh, 1930s ambiance is just one aspect of Bardo's presentation.

Photos by Hubert Bonnet

The restaurant Remy Pettus had his eye on wasn't available. Prolific Minneapolis restaurateur John Rimarcik had shuttered the place he called "Rachel's" for a refresh. Pettus was a young chef, bouncing around town with a burning desire to create his own restaurant, and he wasn't about to take "no" for an answer.

The Culinary Institute of America-educated chef had returned to the Twin Cities after cooking around the country at places like Charlie Palmer's Dry Creek in California and Moto in Chicago. He opened Eastside for restaurateur Ryan Burnett and was looking for the chance to open his own place.

After securing the space at 222 E. Hennepin Avenue in Minneapolis, Pettus went to work. The room was polished to 1930s glamour and glory with soft lighting, comfortable seats, and a gorgeous outdoor patio. Above the bar, a mural of the nearby Hennepin Avenue bridge curves over the bar.

Sara Timmer was brought on to run the bar program and soon began creating fantastic, seasonal cocktails. The aptly named Sweater Weather is a mix of rye, mulled spice syrup and served frothy, over ice with a rosemary garnish wrapped in orange zest. It's the cocktail equivalent of cuddling before a roaring fire. There's a daily cocktail selection, allowing the bar staff to stretch their creativity and every time I ordered it, we got something expertly balanced and delicious.

In the kitchen, Pettus' menu changes through the seasons and is broken out by cold dishes, seafood, pasta and grains, pasture and grains, plus sides and bread. Through the fall and winter, a roasted vegetable salad makes use of cellared beets, using garnet and golden colors, plus little bi-colored ones that are turned into chips that will convert even the most ardent beet-hater.

One dish that hasn't changed much are the boquerone: little fish that are served on charred toast with just-barely-set cooked eggs. It's salty, funky, creamy, crusty and especially satisfying paired with a glass of Spanish wine.

Speaking of wine, that's another thing they are doing well. The wide variety of wine has all kinds of interesting, hard-to-source bottles that are a blast to explore. Prices range from completely affordable to special occasion.

Pastas are made in-house and the agnolotti are puffy, soft cheese filled pillows, served with more beets. Gnocchi are exactly as they should be: puffy, chewy and just a little crusty from a healthy amount of butter and little bit of heat.

The risotto was a saucy, creamy mix that included toasty grains of wild rice with hearty farro that was fleshed out with toothsome yellow wild mushrooms making a remarkable vegetarian entree.

Digging into the meat, the kitchen does well with chicken. A little torchon is a young bird cooked to its succulent best with irresistible crispy skin. Although the can't-miss stellar stunner of the dish is what Pettus does with duck. The fat is perfectly rendered, melting on the tongue with the medium-rare cooked meat. There's an option of ordering this dish with some lily-gilding foie gras, and I say go for it. This lob of decadence is so perfectly prepared that you'll feel like royalty mowing it down.

Bardo is a remarkable neighborhood restaurant that has been filled at every visit with people who obviously live nearby. There were well-behaved kids, retirees, and hipsters all leaning into their tables, smiling in conversation and clearing their plates of all food. ■

BARDO
222 E. Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis
612-886-8404
www.bardompls.com

Bardo offers a range of meticulously crafted dishes from meat and seafood...

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Chef Remy Pettus, of Bardo.

Game hen torchon is one of many delectable dishes offered at Bardo.

A daily cocktail selection is offered underneath a mural of the Hennepin Ave Bridge mural by Kyle Pettis.

Bardo makes the most of its space by offering roomy seating arrangements at both the bar and in booths, as well as an expansive patio during the warmer months.

The South Minneapolis-based Tenant revolves around a cozy, eight-seat counter and an open kitchen.

Photos by Hubert Bonnet

Romantic Dining: Tenant

BY JOY SUMMERS

The best first date I ever had began with an inauspicious "no." No, I did not want to get all 'do-ed up and go out to the hot new club that just got a write-up. I wanted to slip into my favorite jeans, the ones that hug all the right places, and ease into a room I could rule. A place we could be ourselves without the self-conscious artifice of newness, the pressure of pretending to be something we weren't.

Dining inside Tenant has the intimacy of those first furtive moments, hands entwined, entering the unknown together. Like the strains of an old Ani DiFranco song: "When there was nothing there was always the possibility of something, becoming what it is." That's a great first date. That was my dinner at Tenant.

Tenant is the realization of a culinary dream for chefs Cameron Cecchini and Grisha Hammes. The two met when they were on the opening team at Borough and worked together again inside this address, 4300 Bryant Avenue South in Minneapolis, when it was Doug Flicker's Piccolo. The restaurant was small then. When they took it over after Flicker closed Piccolo, they made the radical decision to make it even smaller.

Walking into the cozy dining room, it's instantly comfortable, with warm wood and golden light, but with an easygoing vibe. A record player spins tunes the chefs pick out. A curved bar allows for seats overlooking the large kitchen and a few tables make up the dining room.

There's no set menu at Tenant. Each night, there's a tasting menu. Guests are essentially buying the ticket and taking the ride. They ask several times before the adventure begins, are there dietary restrictions? Aversions? Allergies? No? Place your napkin in your lap, and away we go.

Each night, the food will change, or maybe it's better to say it evolves. Diners are only given a drink menu, listing a pairing option and a few, well-selected beers and wine. Nonalcoholic offerings were slim, but the tableside French press service was every bit as impressive as the cava pour.

All the dishes are served in handmade, oatmeal-colored pottery, designed specifically for the chefs by a friend. A small tiftin revealed two courses, each delicate and fun to dig into. A beet and crudo dish had an effervescent freshness, earthy vegetal notes were capped with bright citrus, cream and supple fish.

A tangle of toothsome noodles were served dressed in a sheet of rich sauce on a plate that echoed the texture of the pasta.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

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TENANT

4300 Bryant Ave. S., Minneapolis
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www.tenantmpls.com

Chefs at Tenant prepare a casual tasting menu of six courses for $50.

The menu at Tenant reflects the current season.

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Photos by Hubert Bonnet

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Divine Destinations for *Romantic Dining*

BY JOY SUMMERS

Last year brought so many new date night dining options into the Twin Cities landscape, including a revitalization of two lovely Minneapolis restaurants. When looking for somewhere to snuggle in over low light, delicious food, and maybe even a bottle of something special, these are four new dining rooms waiting for your reservation.

GRAND CAFE

3804 Grand Ave., Minneapolis
612-822-8260
www.grandcafemn.com

Jamie Malone first began in the kitchen of this modest neighborhood restaurant under different ownership. When she took over the business, the room was given a gorgeous upgrade, with soft pink and lush green accents. The food is old school French with a few modern and worldly touches. Can't-miss dishes are the foie gras royale, a fluffy savory mousse topped with creme fraiche in the cutest egg cup this side of Normand, and the pike quenelle, a creamy near custard-y dish with a rich crayfish sauce.

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528 University Ave. SE, Minneapolis
612-379-4909
www.almampls.com

This classically romantic restaurant from James Beard Award-winning chef Alex Roberts somehow managed to get even better with a room refresh. The room is more modern, with blue and dark wood accents, and the food continues to shine with the Minnesota seasons. With the addition of an outrageously gorgeous and comfortable boutique hotel above and a pastry-stocked cafe next door, there's really no reason to ever leave.

Photo by Wendy Nielsen

Photo by Eliesa Johnson

Photo by Bodega, Ltd

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

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MARTINA

4312 Upton Ave. S, Minneapolis
612-922-9913
www.martinarestaurant.com

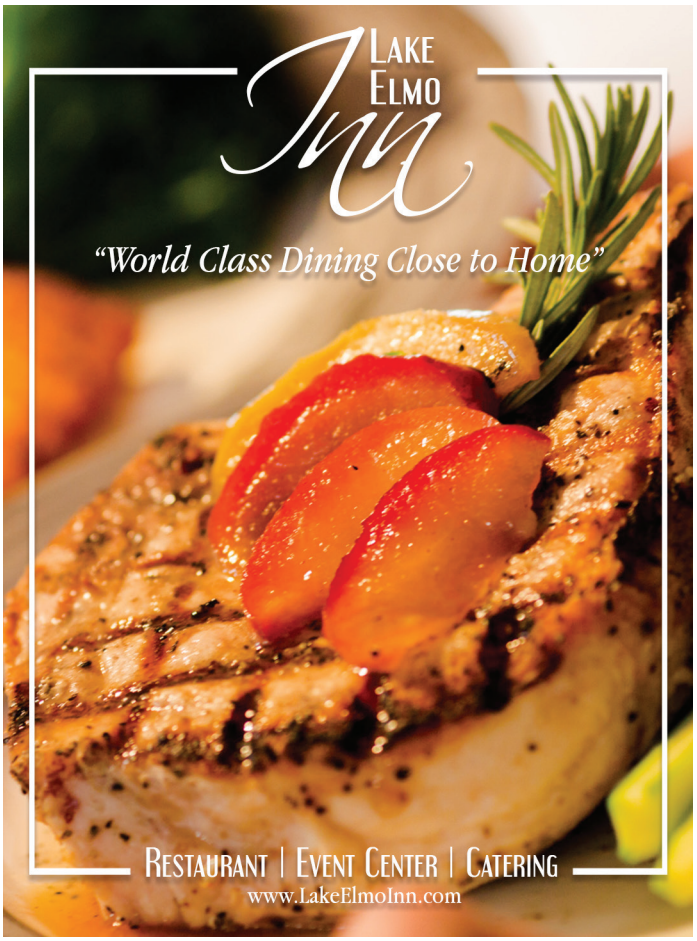
This restaurant address seems to hold nothing but greatness. Chef Daniel del Prado opened Martina late last year in the space that last held Upton 43 in Linden Hills and again, this kitchen is serving extraordinary (although very different) food. Del Prado pulls from his heritage, cooking the Argentinian food from his youth that takes great advantage of the wood-fired grill, and some Southern Italian dishes influenced by his mother. The pasta is all made fresh on-site and cooked to toothsome perfection. Seafood dishes are especially flavor dense and light on the tongue.

BELLECOUR

739 Lake St. E, Wayzata
952-444-5200
www.bellecourrestaurant.com

Chef Gavin Kaysen is internationally renowned and respected. The food world reacted with surprise when he announced he would be returning to Minnesota to cook, but we are so glad that he did. His second restaurant, located in downtown Wayzata, is an ode to comfortable French dining, with classics like duck a l'orange and outrageously tasty roasted cauliflower existing in perfect harmony. In the summer, boaters are comfortable just rolling up as is, but the best dining here is on a date. Linger into the late hours over exquisitely decadent dishes and end with as many desserts as possible. The wine list is also second to none and a special treat if you'd like a little splurge.

Photos by Eliesa Johnson



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SUPER BOWL WHAT TO DO

With Super Bowl 52 coming to U.S. Bank Stadium next month, the eyes of the nation will be all over Minneapolis come Sunday, Feb. 4. If you're willing to brave the cold and want to mingle with football fans from Minnesota and beyond, here are some can't-miss Super Bowl-related parties and events happening throughout the Twin Cities.

Super Bowl Experience. Photo courtesy of Bullseye Event Group

SUPER BOWL EXPERIENCE AT MINNEAPOLIS CONVENTION CENTER

Minneapolis, MN
Jan. 26-Feb. 2
$35-55
www.fanhospitality.com

Come to the Super Bowl Experience at Minneapolis Convention Center for an NFL experience unlike any other. With autograph signing sessions with over 50 NFL stars, a Super Bowl Memorabilia Show, live broadcasts from NFL Network, an NFL merchandise shop, viewing of the Vince Lombardi trophy, and several other events, the Super Bowl Experience will undoubtedly get you in the Super Bowl spirit.

SUPER BOWL LIVE FAN FESTIVAL ON NICOLLET MALL

Minneapolis, MN
Jan. 26-Feb. 4
Free
www.mnsuperbowl.com

Presented by Verizon, Super Bowl Live Fan Festival will be featuring live concerts, national broadcasts activations, food, and fun winter activities. Performers include Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, Idina Menzel, The Revolution, Morris Day and The Time, Dessa, and many more.

BOLD NORTH ZIP LINE

Minneapolis, MN
Jan. 26-Feb. 4
$30
www.mnsuperbowl.com

If you're bold and you don't mind the cold, this Super Bowl event is for you. Grab tickets for the Bold North Zip Line and zoom over the Mississippi River from Nicollet Island to West River Parkway.

OPENING NIGHT – FUELED BY GATORADE

Xcel Energy Center, St. Paul, MN
Jan. 29
Prices vary, resale only
www.xcelenergycenter.com

Kick off the Super Bowl celebrations at Xcel Energy Center as both teams interact for the first time on stage before the Super Bowl. There will also be special appearances and autographs by Minnesota Vikings legends, cheerleaders, and team mascots.

Esera Tuaolo's Inclusion Party. Photo by Steven Albert

ESERA TUAOLO'S INCLUSION PARTY

The Pourhouse, Minneapolis, MN
Jan. 31
$50-250
www.hateiswrong.org

Created as a means of bringing football fans and the GLBT community closer together, this inclusive celebration is presented by the Hate is Wrong nonprofit and hosted by Hate is Wrong board member, former NFL defensive tackle, and The Voice contestant, Esera Tuaolo. The event will raise money for diversity and anti-bullying groups, and will feature performances by contestants from Season 13 of the popular reality show The Voice.

POOPER BOWL WITH VANDER VON ODD + MEATBALL

Honey, Minneapolis, MN
Jan. 31
$10-20
www.facebook.com/flipphone

Before the Super Bowl comes to Minneapolis, another Big Game is coming to Honey, courtesy of the Pooper Bowl, a dance-and-drag extravaganza starring drag stars such as Nocturna Lee Mission and Dragula Season One stars Vander Von Odd and Meatball. For a few dollars more, a meet-and-greet with Von Odd and Meatball is available.

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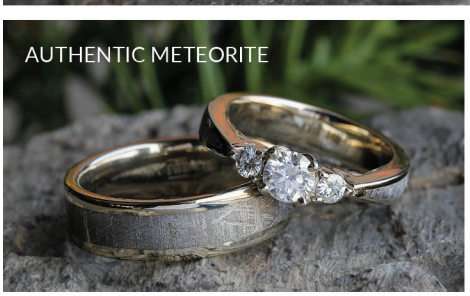

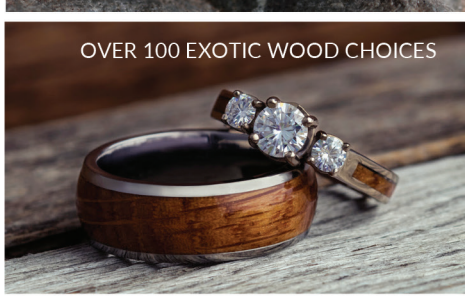

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ILLUMINATE SOUTH LOOP

Bloomington Central Station Park, Bloomington, MN
Feb. 1-3
www.bloomingtonmn.gov

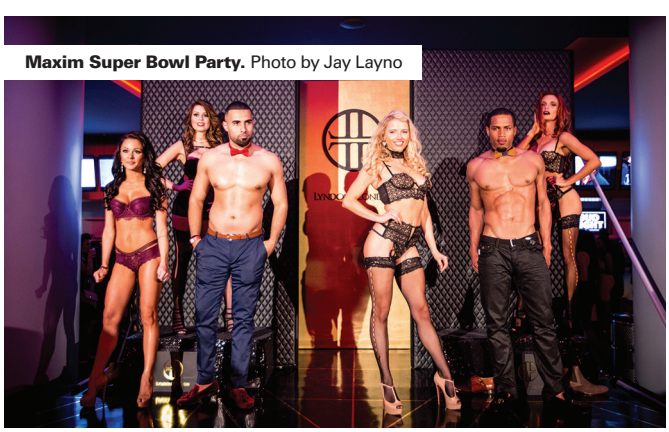
For live music, art installations, and food by Chef Paul Lynch from Urbana Craeft Kitchen at the Hyatt Regency, stop by Bloomington Central Station Park for Illuminate South Loop. Located right off the Blue Line Central Station, Illuminate South Loop will feature delicious fare, a wide array of cocktails, and art projects and performances.

Arctic Bold Fashion. Photo courtesy of MKx8 Design

ARCTIC BOLD FASHION SHOW 2018

Stella's Fish Cafe, Minneapolis, MN
Feb. 1
$100-300
www.arcticbold.com

It's the only thing the Super Bowl's missing: fashion. Join guest host Idris Elba (yes, you read that right) for a night of fashion, raffles, and giving back to organizations like the American Diabetes Association and the Black Women's Health Imperative.



Maxim Super Bowl Party. Photo by Jay Layno

MAXIM SUPER BOWL PARTY

360 Super Dome, Downtown Minneapolis, MN
Feb. 3
$750-21,000
www.themaximevents.com

For a night of art, music, and fashion, check out this year's Maxim Super Bowl Party produced by Karma International. Performances include Travis Scott, DJ Khaled, and DNCE. Among the attendees will be VIP and A-List celebrities as well as a number of athletes.

TASTE OF THE NFL

Saint Paul RiverCentre, St. Paul, MN
Feb. 3
$700
www.tasteofthenfl.com

Any event is worth going to if you have to eat your way through it. Come to the Taste of the NFL event hosted by Andrew Zimmern and Ben Leber for numerous food stations prepared by famous chefs, sports memorabilia, and the opportunity to mingle with chefs and NFL stars.

DAVE MATTHEWS BAND – THE NIGHT BEFORE

Xcel Energy Center, St. Paul, MN
Feb. 3
$57-127
www.xcelenergycenter.com

Get ready for the Super Bowl at The Night Before show headlined by Dave Matthews Band. Enjoy hits like "What Would You Say," "Crash Into Me," and "Too Much" in preparation for the big game the following day.

SUPER BOWL PARTY AT EAGLEBOLTBAR

eagleBOLTbar, Minneapolis, MN
Feb. 4
www.eagleboltbar.com

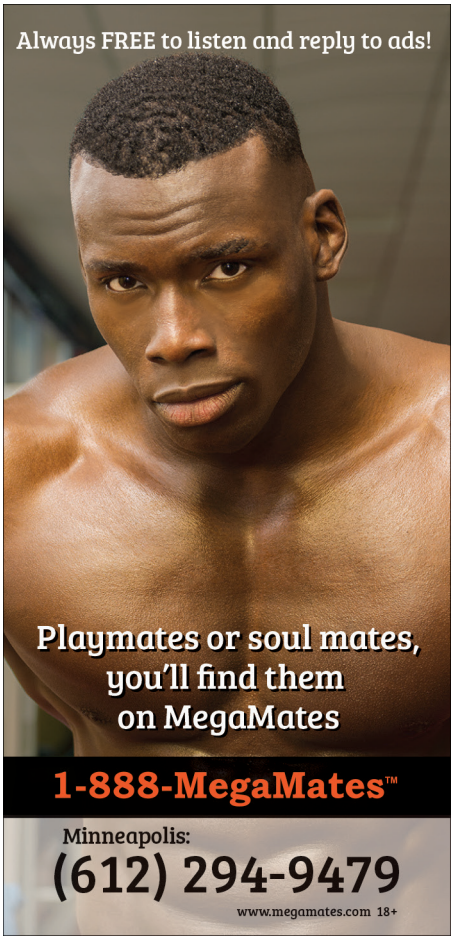
Get ready to enjoy the Super Bowl in one of Minneapolis' premier GLBT establishments with the eagleBOLTbar, located in the East Town district. The bar will feature a heated tent where the game will be broadcast, along with a broadcast inside the Eagle. There will also be a special edition of Super Bowl Showtunes in the Bolt with a half-time show broadcast. Cover charge at the door.

Big Gay Super Bowl Party at LUSH. Graphic courtesy of LUSH

BIG GAY SUPER BOWL PARTY AT LUSH

LUSH, Minneapolis, MN
Feb. 4
$15-20
www.lushmpls.com

For the third year in a row, the Northeast GLBT party zone known as LUSH will host its Big Gay Super Bowl Party on Super Bowl Sunday. At 11 a.m., the bar will hold a Jock Jams Drag Brunch, which includes a homemade breakfast buffet. During the big game itself, a massive party hosted by Victoria DeVille and Nocturna Lee Mission will be raging, with game and trivia, as well as free Jell-O shots after touchdowns, and a wings and nacho bar. ■



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Second Friday of Every Month • 7:30-9am

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Women's Networking Lunch

Monthly • Noon-1:30pm

Join us for a fun event that highlights LGBT and Allied Women at Wilde Roast! A great opportunity to network, it also is a great place to forge connections with other women business leaders, have some tasty food and have the opportunity to highlight your work.

Become a Quorum Member

Members of Quorum enjoy several benefits, including access to a plethora of networking events and signature event discounts, business directory listing and event-based advertising opportunities, Workplace Alliance event participation, and the ability to find business at the national level via certification with the NGLCC. For more information, visit www.twincitiesquorum.com/membership.

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LEATHER LIFE | BY STEVE LENIUS | PHOTO BY STEVE LENIUS

Leather Evolution, 2018

"What do a kitty, two puppies, a jock, and a Sir have in common?" That was the opening sentence of the official press release for the Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2018 contest, which was held the evening of Saturday, Nov. 11, 2017, at the eagleBOLTbar.

The second sentence in the press release answered this question: "They were the five diverse contestants representing their version of leather as high cow season descended on the eagleBOLTbar for the Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2018 Contest Weekend (#MME2018)!"

Notice that word—"diverse"—that seems to be everywhere these days. Notice also that the contestants were representing "their version of leather." (Find more photos and coverage of the Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2018 contest online at www.lavendermagazine.com/our-lives/pictures-tell-story-mr-minneapolis-eagle-2018-contest/).

The contest was great and very enjoyable. But I was struck by how different it was from the first leather contest I attended in 1993, 25 years ago. Back then some people might have thought "diversity" meant leathermen and leatherwomen in the same room. Some people also might have said leather didn't have "versions." Leather meant leather—and, well, maybe latex or rubberwear.

The leather community that started in the post-WWII era was primarily a subset of the gay male community. Leather lesbians had their own circles. Sometimes the men's and women's communities intersected, although primarily on the men's turf and terms.

For many years the predominant archetype of the gay male leather community was the hypermasculine leatherman, the "Tom of Finland" type. The predominant archetypes for leatherwomen were "Dykes on Bikes" (butch) and biker babes (femme). These archetypes still are

The contestants at the conclusion of the Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2018 contest, from left: Jay; Timber, first runner-up; Randy Ingram-Lile, Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2018; Kitten Glitter; Pup Spike; and Eric "Pup Omega" Stafford, Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2017.

prominent and respected in today's leather community; the new Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2018 titleholder identifies as a Sir, which is pretty traditional. But over the years the leather archetypes have been joined by other archetypes such as puppies (and now kittens), sports gear, furries, and "fierce" or genderqueer leather.

Some leather traditionalists might not understand or identify with these new archetypes. They might feel that all these new archetypes are intruding on their community. They might wish that the black-leather biker archetypes still were the only ones.

However, there was a time, around the turn of the millennium, when leather seemed to be aging. There were fears that the community was dwindling. I remember hearing discussion at that time among leatherfolk asking, "Where are the young people?" These conversations resulted in my writing a column in 2002 (Lavender #194) about "the next generation of leather." Much of that column concerned tensions between the "Old Guard" (traditionalists) and the "New Guard" (those new to leather, many of whom were not aware of, or did not respect, leather's history and traditions). Those labels now seem so last-century, don't they?

In that column in 2002, I predicted that the next generation of leather "will do things differently, and their leather community will reflect them, just as today's leather community is a reflection of us." I also said in that column that leather "will continue to change and evolve. It won't stay the same. If we try to keep it the same—if we don't let it change—it will die. We will kill it."

The leather/BDSM/fetish community, and communities in general, don't grow and evolve according to a prepared plan. No "Council of Elders" dictates in advance how the leather community should, and therefore will, develop.

Leather has indeed changed and evolved since I wrote that column in 2002. Regardless of what traditionalists might wish, leather community and culture has evolved so that the reality of the leather/BDSM/fetish community today is leather plus assorted other interests. Do all these new archetypes or interests, and all the people attracted to them, make the community poorer? No. They—both the archetypes and the people—make the community broader, more interesting, more inclusive, more vibrant, and more alive. They also make the community stronger and more able to perpetuate itself.

"Where are the young people?" They're here, they're involved, and they are making the community their own, as is the natural order of things. Some of them are even entering leather contests and finding the courage to get up on a stage and proclaim, in very public fashion, their membership in and love for this community. Each of the contestants in the Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2018 contest proudly represented themselves, and their version of leather, very well. ■

RIDE REVIEW | BY RANDY STERN | PHOTOS BY RANDY STERN

2018 Volkswagen Atlas

How do you improve on a "family favorite?"

Firstly, you have to define "family" here. Are we talking a family of five-to-seven people, including a couple of their children? Or, are we talking the nested couple with two large pets or a hobby that includes massive amounts of landscaping and other home improvements?

Little do the automobile manufacturers know that they are not making these midsized SUVs for just the typical family anymore. However, they are using the prototypical nuclear family as a measurement on how well they can execute these popular vehicles.

Recently, Volkswagen jumped into the fast-rising segment with their own answer to the three-row mid-sized family SUV. They call it the Atlas. Just like its namesake, it has a lot riding on its shoulders.

Volkswagen has been discovering how to cater to American tastes. From its North American market version of the Passat mid-sized sedan, they created an SUV on top of this platform. The Atlas is built alongside its Americanized cousin at their Chattanooga, Tennessee plant, which gives it an advantage for being developed and made for its intended market.

The result is a midsized SUV made for American families of all kinds, which makes us wonder how much of this big, three-row SUV still has that Volkswagen feel we know and love from some of our favorite cars.

From the outside, one would look at the Volkswagen badge and ponder whether it fits into this straightforward body. The Atlas was not designed to be a standout in looks alone. It is a functional design that does not need embellishment. It also garners the presence of its competitors without wanting to flash a few lines and creases.

The hallmark of the Atlas design goes back to how functional it is. It has large doors for greater access to the cabin, along with a large liftgate for easy loading into the cargo bay. The ride height is your standard eight inches off the ground to the bottom of chassis. That allows the Atlas to clear most obstacles in its way.

Climbing inside of the large doors you'll find an equally large cabin. The total volume inside of the Atlas is 153.7 cubic feet, enabling expansive space for seven passengers. The seats are sized well, wrapped in the SEL's V-Tex leatherette upholstery. There is some bolstering and support in the front seats. There is a lot of expansive room in the second row, with rake and recline adjustments available. Third-row access is easy with a slide-away feature on both the driver and passenger side. An adult can sit in the third row. In fact, an adult can sit behind each other along all three rows in decent comfort.

For cargo space, it is also expandable. With all three rows up, you start off with 20.6 cubic feet. Fold down the second and third rows of seats, and you have 96.8 cubic feet of usable space. Think of how much you can take in the back of an Atlas!

The instrumentation is put together by a TFT screen in-between the two big dials. If one selects the SEL Premium model, you can get the new Digital Cockpit instrument cluster that is a full TFT screen with full customization for the driver. The Digital Cockpit is supreme in execution and information dissemination, yet you would have to pay much more for the privilege. The regular instrumentation works fantastically, as it carries the excellent readouts Volkswagen is known for.

The MIB II infotainment system gets a new interface that offers a flatter, cleaner screen with gesture motion sensing. The App-Connect system works very well with Apple CarPlay, Android Auto, and MirrorLink compatibility. A standard set of eight speakers emitted solid sound throughout the cabin.

The Atlas lineup comes with a choice of three drivelines. There is a 235-horsepower turbocharged 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine available only with front-wheel drive. The 276-horsepower 3.6-liter V6 is truly the pick of the range. It is available in front-wheel drive and the 4Motion all-wheel-drive system. Our tester had the latter driveline, which is really the way to go. A new eight-speed automatic transmission is standard across the range. By choosing the V6/4Motion version, you can tow up to 5,000 pounds in the Atlas.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38

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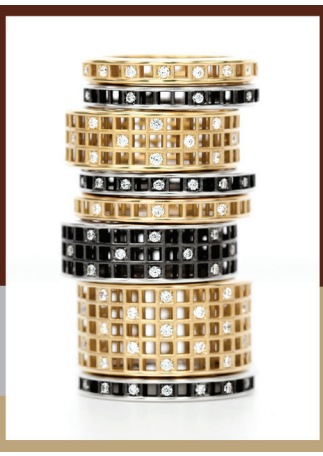
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In terms of fuel economy, we saw an average of 20.9 MPG in our care. This beats the combined average stated by Volkswagen.

Ride quality is fantastic. It is what you expect for an SUV of its size and stature. With the capability of seating seven adults, no one will feel uneasy as it clocks the miles to your final destination, even if it is a cross-town jaunt. Handling is what you expect in a midsized SUV, but with a bit of Volkswagen swagger to it. On the SEL, you do get 18-inch wheels with big sidewalls, perfect for all-season protection and ride.

Braking was superb, with excellent feel from the pedal. In both normal and panic situations, stops were pretty good in terms of distance and response; however, the steering felt a bit light in response from the wheel. This needs some qualification since one would think of Volkswagen as a sportier, German-bred automobiles. In this class, you need to have a lighter feel since you have 4,502 pounds of SUV to maneuver in the tightest of spots around our Twin Cities and beyond. The result is that you will find a tight turning radius for its class and decent on-center feel with an assist from the lane-keeping feature.

One thing that makes a Volkswagen stand out is a huge emphasis on safety and accident avoidance. With features such as lane departure warning, blind spot monitoring, adaptive cruise, front collision warning, and autonomous emergency braking, you get a very safe SUV that has already garnered top marks from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Insurance Institute of Highway Safety based on crash testing.

The Atlas lineup starts at $30,500. Our V6 SEL with 4Motion tester came to $43,615. Currently, the Atlas lineup tops out at under $50,000—which puts it on par with the rest of the segment.

Volkswagen may have just created the best vehicle in a resurgent class. This was proved by a recent comparison put on by MotorWeek and Cars.com, where the Atlas took the top spot over three of its rivals. We agree with this result based on our own experience with other vehicles in its class.

Honestly, how good is the Volkswagen Atlas, as being the new player in a truly American class of vehicle? That would depend on how our families respond to this vehicle. Let us assure that you will not go wrong with this cavernous and accommodating SUV as your mode of family transport. Choosing one will make this your "family favorite." ■

SKIRTING THE ISSUES | BY ELLEN KRUG

Death Gap Math

When I was younger, like in my 20s, 30s, and early 40s, the concept of death was relatively foreign, as in, "That's so far away."

But not now. At 61, I'm thinking about death quite a bit.

It started gradually—first as a curiosity, really, where I began to note the ages of people who died. *Hmm*, I thought.

Later, the focus got more personal; I began doing "death gap math" where I calculated the difference in years between a decedent's lifespan and my then-current age. For a long time, the death gap was a decent 20 or 25 years, but almost overnight, the gap began closing—soon it was 15 years, then ten, and just the other day I read about someone dying who was only a year older than me.

Crap. There's so much more I want to accomplish before I go and clearly, time isn't on my side.

News of certain deaths or serious illnesses close to home hasn't helped, either.

I recently got word about the death of "Rachel," a 69-year-old (an eight-year death gap) transgender friend who remained largely closeted and living as a married community leader named "Robert" (a pseudonym) in greater Minnesota. I had known Rachel for only two years but in that time, she had come out as her true self to her family (with mostly favorable results—her wife was incredibly supportive) and planned to go public in the near future. Then cancer struck.

I have another friend, a 56-year-old (a *negative* five-year potential death gap—yikes) woman who too is battling cancer. Not long ago, her husband outlined all the tests, cancer cell genetic mapping regimens, and highly expensive therapies they're doing to keep her alive. He's a lawyer and pushing all kinds of buttons and people (and drawing on big cash reserves) to make sure no possibility goes unchecked.

I thought to myself, *I have no one to push buttons for me. I'd be sunk.*

The last phone call with my friend's husband so scared me that it triggered a panic attack. "I've got to go," I said feigning an excuse as I ran from a light rail station in downtown Minneapolis. I near-sprinted in the cold rain repeating to myself, *It's coming for you. It's coming for you. It's coming and you're all alone.*

In my clearer moments, I remember Buddhist teachings that everyone really is alone and that fretting about death simply is needless suffering over something about which no one has any control.

Because I'm also a planner, I recently revised my will and took out yet another life insurance policy to provide in small ways for the many people who've been good to me. It won't be much per person, but still, leaving something for someone may be a way of sparking them to pay it forward—a concept that's dear to me.

I've also composed "last letters" (to be held until after I croak) to a dozen or so humans where I wrote about how much they've mattered to me and thanked them for loving me unconditionally. Yep, in addition to being neurotic, I'm also quite sentimental.

It's not that I'm necessarily afraid of death. I've had good life—actually, by all accounts, I've had two incredibly good lives. One was for nearly 53 years presenting as a man where I had all the love, material possessions, community stature, and money that anyone could ever ask for.

The other, beginning in 2009, was as me, the *real me*, a woman who gets to do all the things that were impossible when I presented as male. Things like writing a memoir, or being a GLBT columnist or radio host, or having the privilege of speaking across the country about what it means to live authentically with a message of compassion for others and for one's self.

Yes, it's been a good long throw, that is for sure.

Still, it seems like just yesterday when I was a teen boy imagining what a good long life would bring. Back then I couldn't even fathom the idea of sitting in 2018 writing this column as a mature (don't you dare think "senior") woman nicknamed Ellie.

I guess that's the thing about living and dying—you just never know what either will bring or how any of it will unfold.

Until that last breath comes, some more sex would be nice. So too would be finishing the second installment of my memoir trilogy (yes, I am working on Book Two). It'd even be great to hear, "I love you," from a romantic partner once more before I pass.

Regardless, I'm not sitting around fixated on death gap math.

At least most of the time, that is. ■

Ellen (Ellie) Krug is the author of Getting to Ellen: A Memoir about Love, Honesty and Gender Change *(2013). She speaks and trains on diversity and inclusion topics; visit www.elliekrug.com where you can also sign up for her newsletter, The Ripple. She welcomes your comments at ellenkrugwriter@gmail.com.*

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